

# ‘Zombie’ coal proposal highlights Japan’s last ditch grasp to fossil fuel

Press release – 11 April 2024

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Japan added 2.5 gigawatts (GW) of new capacity to the fourth-largest operating coal fleet in the world behind China, India, and the United States, narrowly outpacing Indonesia for likely the last time in 2023, according to [Global Energy Monitor](#)’s annual survey of the global coal fleet.

The additions mean that no more coal plants are under construction in Japan, with units at [Kobe](#), [Saijo](#), and [Yokosuka](#) power stations added in 2023.

While proposals for new coal plants have steadily decreased over the last decade down 97.6% since 2015, Japan still clings to one of the only remaining coal plant proposals in the Group of Seven countries.

The 500 megawatt integrated gasification combined cycle unit at the [Matsushima power station](#), dubbed GENESIS, is representative of Japan’s favor for technologically infeasible plans for “clean” coal innovation rather than the retirement and replacement of coal-fired power stations with renewable energy alternatives.

Japan is promoting the scheme for continued coal use across Southeast Asia, pursuing the international legitimization of the strategy despite the technology being immature, inefficient, expensive, and unlikely to scale.

Moreover, Japan does not have a planned coal phaseout target, and a meager 1.9 GW of operating capacity has a future planned retirement date, highlighting the country’s reticence to embrace a renewables energy transition.

Data in the [Global Coal Plant Tracker](#) show that 69.5 GW of coal power capacity came online across the world while 21.1 GW was retired in 2023, resulting in a net annual increase of 48.4 GW for the year and a global total capacity of 2,130 GW. This is the highest net increase in operating coal capacity since 2016.

The surge in new coal plants coming online in China drove this increase — 47.4 GW, or roughly two-thirds of global additions — coupled with new capacity in Indonesia, India, Vietnam, Japan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, South Korea, Greece, and Zimbabwe. In total, 22.1 GW came online and 17.4 GW was retired outside of China, resulting in a 4.7 GW net increase to the operating coal fleet.

**Flora Champenois, Coal Program Director for Global Energy Monitor**, said, “Japan stands by its divergence from global goals for the renewable energy transition, but a Paris-aligned coal phase out, focused on a true transformation, remains technologically and economically feasible.”

The report also shows:

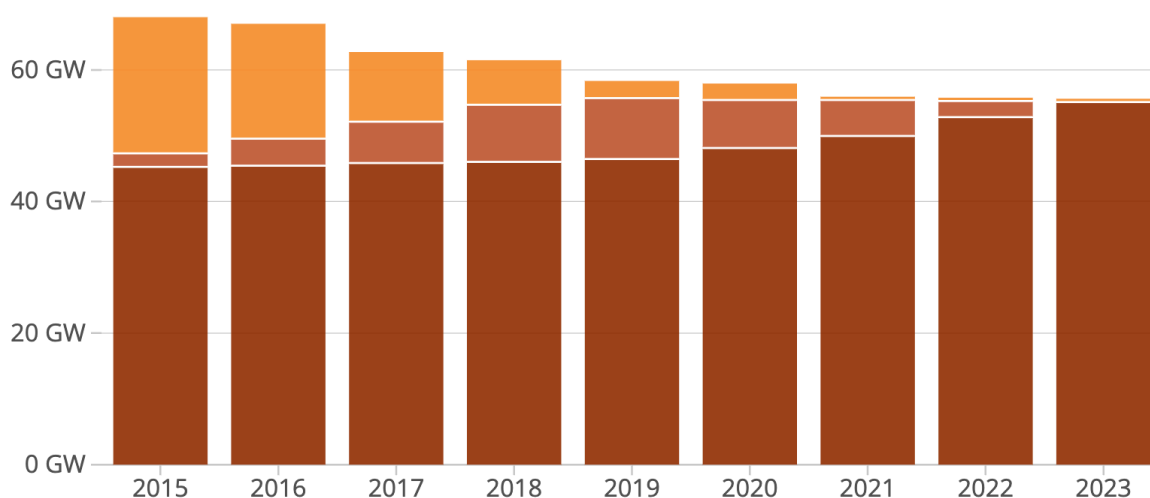
- The Group of Seven (G7) major industrial countries accounts for 15% (310 GW) of the world’s operating coal capacity, down from 23% (443 GW) in 2015. With the completion of new units in Japan in 2023, the G7 no longer has any coal in construction but is still home to one proposal in Japan and two in the U.S.
- The Group of Twenty (G20) is home to 92% of the world’s operating coal capacity (1,968 GW) and 88% of the pre-construction coal capacity (336 GW).
- China and the ten countries following it account for 95% of the global pre-construction capacity. The remaining 5% is distributed among 21 countries, eleven of which have only one project and are on the brink of achieving the “no new coal” milestone.
- In 2023, the decrease in proposed coal outside of China was tempered by 20.9 GW of entirely new proposals, led by India (11.4 GW), Kazakhstan (4.6 GW), and Indonesia (2.5 GW), as well as 4.1 GW of previously shelved or cancelled capacity considered proposed again.

In addition to Global Energy Monitor, the report’s co-authors are the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, E3G, Reclaim Finance, Sierra Club, Solutions for Our Climate, Kiko Network, Climate Action Network Europe, Bangladesh Groups, Trend Asia, Alliance for Climate Justice and Clean Energy, Chile Sustentable, POLEN Transiciones Justas, Iniciativa Climática de México, and Arayara.

## Japan increased its coal power capacity in 2023, and a coal plant proposal remains under consideration

Coal-fired power capacity in Japan by status, in gigawatts (GW)

■ Operating ■ Construction ■ All pre-construction (announced, pre-permit, permitted)



Source: Global Coal Plant Tracker, January 2024



### About the Global Coal Plant Tracker

The Global Coal Plant Tracker provides information on coal-fired power units from around the world generating 30 megawatts and above. It catalogs every operating coal-fired generating unit, every new unit proposed since 2010, and every unit retired since 2000. The map and underlying data is updated bi-annually, around January and July. Around April and October, partial supplemental releases also cover updates to proposed coal units outside of China.

### About Global Energy Monitor

Global Energy Monitor (GEM) develops and shares information in support of the worldwide movement for clean energy. By studying the evolving international energy landscape, creating databases, reports, and interactive tools that enhance understanding, GEM seeks to build an open guide to the world's energy system. Follow us at [www.globalenergymonitor.org](http://www.globalenergymonitor.org) and on X @GlobalEnergyMon